



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel

Guide for Students and Parents/ Carers

August 2008

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1. Introduction

Each year students going to and from schools in the Northern Territory undertake over 1 million bus trips.

Most students behave appropriately most of the time. However, misbehaviour by some students can make travel unpleasant for their colleagues, distract the driver, result in damage to vehicles or, in extreme cases, put bus occupants and other road users at serious risk.

To help ensure that school students behave sensibly and safely on the buses, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure together with the Department of Education and Training, bus operators, schools and police, have developed this Code of Conduct for students, school bus drivers and operators.

2. What is the Code of Conduct?

The Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel (the Code) is a set of guidelines for students, parents and carers to follow on school buses. It forms the basis for the specific rules to manage behaviour on buses and at Interchanges.

It also includes procedures for bus operators, bus drivers and schools to follow.

This document advises the community of the broad procedures that are already being used and which will be updated periodically.

3. To Whom Does it Apply?

This Code applies to all students attending primary and secondary schools in the Northern Territory who use buses to travel to or from school or for other school related activities.

For special needs school transport, please refer to the 'School Bus Transport for Students with Special Needs – A Code of Good Practice'.

4. How Does the Code Benefit You?

The Code sets standards of behaviour and provides an agreed systematic process so that disruptions or misbehaviour by students are dealt with quickly and fairly. It also aims to minimise the number and severity of these disruptions.

The following table lists some of the types of behaviour that are encouraged and those which are not allowed.

5. What are the Standards?

Parents/ carers should discuss these standards with their children so they all clearly understand what they should and should not do.

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For most students, complying with the Code will not require any change in their current behaviour. By continuing to act in accordance with this Code, students will help ensure that all passengers have a comfortable and safe journey.

Bus drivers also abide to a Code of Conduct. To provide feedback on bus driver behaviour, please contact the Public Transport Division in the first instance on 8924 7845.

Behavioural Standards	
Behaviour	Examples of how to meet the Code of Conduct
Respect other people and property	<p>Treat other people and their possessions with respect.</p> <p>Make a seat available to those who may require it, i.e. student who is injured/ on crutches.</p> <p>Follow the bus driver's directions without argument.</p> <p>Do not interfere with bus property, equipment, shelters or signs by marking, removing or damaging them.</p>
Wait for the bus in an orderly manner	<p>Wait well back from the kerb or roadside until the bus stops and allow other passengers to leave the bus first.</p> <p>Stand quietly without calling out or shouting in an obscene, unruly or aggressive manner.</p> <p>Do not push or shove other people and step onto the bus in a single file.</p>
While on the bus, conduct yourself in an orderly manner	<p>Students must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Show their valid bus pass/ ticket upon request, or purchase a ticket when boarding the bus. ▪ On request by a Bus Driver / Operator, Transit Officer or Police Officer produce Student ID. ▪ Sit properly on a seat if one is available (in allocated seat if directed by the driver). ▪ Wear the seat belt properly adjusted and fastened, if one is available. ▪ If standing, remain in the designated area (i.e. stand behind the front passenger seat), and ensure a good hand hold on the strap, chair or railing. ▪ Speak quietly and do not create unnecessary noise that may distract the driver. <p>Students must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bully, harass or intimidate other vehicle occupants. If incident/s occurs, inform the bus driver as soon as is practical. ▪ Carry dangerous items (such as knives etc). ▪ Unbuckle the seat belt (where fitted) or move around on the bus while it is in motion. ▪ Vandalise bus or other students' property. ▪ Interfere with or damage a seat belt fitted to a school bus. ▪ Interfere with the driving controls, emergency exits or switches. ▪ Place feet on the seats.

Behavioural Standards	
Behaviour	Examples of how to meet the Code of Conduct
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Fight, spit or use offensive language.▪ Throw any article around or from the bus.▪ Leave rubbish on the bus, or at stops or Interchanges.▪ Consume food or drink (other than water from a sealable container).▪ Play audible music (loud music that may distract the bus driver) without permission of the driver.▪ Smoke (prohibited on all buses).▪ Put any part of their body outside of the bus.▪ Stand forward of the front passenger seat.
Use designated stops	It is the responsibility of students to disembark at their correct designated stop. When travelling on rural services advise the driver where to disembark when a designated stop is not available. The driver will stop in a safe location as close to the request as is practical.
When leaving the bus, do so in an orderly manner	Wait until the bus stops before moving to get off. Never cross the road in front of the bus. Wait until the bus has moved away and it is safe to cross. Use crossings or traffic lights if available.
In case of an emergency or a breakdown	Follow the driver's instructions. Leave the bus in a quiet and orderly fashion. Wait in the area indicated by the driver.

6. Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras is one of a number of measures that help to reduce criminal or unacceptable behaviour or fear of criminal activity in a defined area. This system is used throughout the school bus network and operated in line within applicable law and Guidelines.

Please refer to the Public Transport Division's CCTV Basic Guidelines for further information, or contact the Division on 8924 7845.

7. Special Needs School Travel

The Northern Territory Government provides transport assistance to and from school for eligible pre-school, primary and secondary students with special needs.

For special needs school transport, please refer to the 'Transport for Students with Special Needs – A Code of Good Practice'.

8. Student Responsibilities and Consequences

8.1 What happens if Students do not comply with the Code?

To promote consistency and fairness in responding to students who do not follow the Code, misbehaviour has been divided into three categories of seriousness.

There are various actions that may be taken if a student does not follow the Code. These range from a warning, banning of travel or possible civil or police action.

The following factors will be taken into consideration when categorising the breaches of the Code:

- the threat to the safety of passengers on the bus and the nature of the incident;
- the seriousness of the breach;
- the age of the student; and
- whether the breach was the first or one of a series of incidents about which the student had been previously cautioned.

Refer to the Procedures for Managing Misbehaviour Amongst School Children Travelling on Buses in the NT.

8.2 Category 1 – Nuisance and Offensive Behaviour

Category 1 includes, but is not limited to:

- failing to show a bus pass upon request;
- not waiting for the bus to stop before moving to get off;
- continually unnecessarily pushing the STOP bell;
- eating and drinking on the bus other than water from a sealable bottle, without the permission of the driver; or
- using offensive body language or language (i.e. swearing or racist language).

Such behaviour will result initially in a written warning being forwarded to the school by the bus operator. Repeated offences may lead to a ban on the student travelling for up to 5 school days.

8.3 Category 2 – Dangerous Behaviour

Category 2 includes, but is not limited to:

- distracting the driver by persistent noise (i.e. yelling and shouting);
- spitting;
- bullying, harassment and intimidation of other passengers;
- damaging other students' property;
- allowing any part of their body to protrude from the bus while it is in motion;
- not wearing an available seat belt in a seat belt equipped bus;
- standing or sitting on the steps or in areas that are not set aside for standing, or refusing to sit down;
- moving about the bus while it is in motion;
- swinging on handrails;
- throwing objects inside or outside the bus;
- deliberately stopping others from getting off the bus;
- group misbehaviour (i.e. yelling and shouting, throwing objects etc);
- refusing to obey reasonable instructions from the driver; or
- verbally threatening the driver.

Such behaviour may result, with no warnings given, to a ban on the student travelling for up to 10 school days.

8.4 Category 3 – Very Destructive and Dangerous Behaviour

Category 3 includes, but is not limited to:

- fighting;
- smoking;
- using matches or lighter;
- carrying dangerous items (i.e. knives etc);
- pushing other passengers out of the doors or windows;

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- deliberately interfering with the driving controls, emergency exits or switches;
- destruction of bus operator property (i.e. breaking windows, slashing seats and seat belts); or
- physically attacking the driver.

Such behaviour will result, with no warnings given, in an immediate 10 school day bus travel ban while decisions are made by the bus operator about the duration of a longer term ban, or possible civil or Police action.

8.5 Repeat Offenders

Where a student has been a repeat offender (for example, three periods of banned travel off the bus within a 12 month period), the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's Director Public Transport, or his or her representative will meet with the bus operator, school principal, parent / carer and school based constable to review the appropriateness of a travel ban of up to 12 months.

The bus operator and school principal may need to consider if the student's return to the bus is conditional on the parent / carer, student and bus operator signing a written behaviour management agreement setting out conditions for travel. If the student breaches the agreement, then refusal of travel is immediate.

9. School Responsibilities

Schools and school principals play a key role in advising students of their responsibilities and the consequences of breaching the Code of Conduct.

School principals are responsible for contacting the parents / carers of children who have received warning or banning letters and informing them that such have been received. If the parents are unable to be contacted prior to the commencement date of the ban, the school must advise the bus operator.

Schools can also assist by:

- a) ensuring the school community is aware of the Code of Conduct information and how to access it;
- b) communicating with students about the importance of adhering to the Code of Conduct; and
- c) providing assistance in managing breaches of the Code of Conduct in consultation with the relevant bus operator and parent / carer.

10. Parent/ Carer Responsibilities

Parents/ carers have responsibility for the behaviour of their children. Accordingly, they should:

- a) ensure their child understands the Code of Conduct;
- b) if requested, attend a meeting with the bus operator and school principal to discuss their child's misbehaviour and its consequences if the child's behaviour has breached the Code of Conduct;
- c) contact the bus operator to discuss matters regarding their child's school bus travel. It is not appropriate for parents / carers to discuss these matters with bus drivers;
- d) recognise that if their child is refused travel, they will need to make alternative travel arrangements and meet any costs for such transport;
- e) understand they may be required to afford restitution in cash or kind to cover costs incurred by damage to bus property, equipment, shelters and signs;
- f) understand that bus operators may review images captured on security systems such as Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), to substantiate claims of breaches of the Code of Conduct; and
- g) realise that a record of a student's misbehaviour will be kept on file.

11. Bus Driver/ Operator Responsibilities

Bus drivers are responsible for the general operation of the bus including:

- a) driving in a safe manner and taking reasonable care for the safety of the passengers (students);
- b) complying with all legal requirements of the relevant legislations and Code of Conduct;
- c) treating all students with respect;
- d) providing reasonable directions to ensure the safety and comfort of the students;
- e) contacting the bus operator for clarification of correct procedures if there is any uncertainty in relation to student misbehaviour; and
- f) ensuring that no person travels on a dedicated school bus other than a student or a duly authorised person.

When a student breaches the Code of Conduct the bus driver shall:

1. advise the student that their behaviour was inappropriate;

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2. try to obtain the student's name and school;
3. advise the student that they will be reported to the bus operator and their behaviour investigated; and
4. record the incident and pass this information onto the bus operator, which will then make a determination of the appropriate action.

11.1 Students Not to be Put Off Buses for Misbehaviour

Bus operators should not remove students who misbehave from a dedicated school bus while en route.

However, where the bus operator or driver holds a reasonable belief that a student constitutes or is likely to constitute an immediate danger to the health, safety or wellbeing of the student or any other person, the driver may:

- stop the bus and arrange for the student to be removed and placed in the care of a Police or Transit Officer;
- if there is a health problem, radio in for assistance and ambulance.

12. Public Transport Division's Responsibilities

The Public Transport Division has overall administrative responsibility for public transport in the Northern Territory. The Division has responsibility for developing and distributing the Code of Conduct for School Bus Travel in consultation and conjunction with schools, Department of Education and Training, bus operators, parent groups, NT Police and non-government organisations.

13. Fair Processes

Students will only be refused travel after the bus operator has informed the school principal in line with the Procedures for Managing Misbehaviour Amongst School Children Travelling on Buses in the NT.

If parents / carers have any question about decisions taken by bus operators in responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct, they should take the matter to the bus operator concerned. If parents / carers remain dissatisfied with the bus operator's decision, they may contact the Public Transport Division and request a review of the decision.

Bus operators should note that the Public Transport Division may issue an instruction that a bus operator's decision to refuse travel to a student be deferred while the matter is being investigated in consultation with stakeholders. The bus operator and drivers must follow this instruction.

14. Review Process

The Code will be reviewed on a two yearly basis, with the next review in 2010.

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15. Contacts

Contact Details (as at June 2008)

Contractors

Buslink:	Darwin	Operations Manager	8947 0577
	Humpty Doo	Depot Manager	8988 2762
	Alice Springs	Operations Manager	8952 5611
Dysons:	Alice Springs	Manager	8952 5688
Cookes Tours:	Batchelor	Manager	8976 0140
Darwin Bus Service:	Darwin	Operations Manager	8924 5471
Kansas:	Nhulunbuy	Manager	8987 2872
Kapser Bus Charters:	Darwin	Manager	8985 1491
Travel North:	Katherine	General Manager	8971 9925

Department of Planning and Infrastructure – Public Transport Division

Network Supervisor	8924 7848
Special Needs Coordinator	8924 7852
Manager, Public Transport Planning	8924 7855
Manager, Public Transport Policy	8924 7846
Director, Public Transport	8924 7847

Department of Education and Training

Student Services	8999 8724
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